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ABSTRACT

This action research project implemented and evaluated a program for improving social skills in order to increase cooperative behavior among elementary school students. The targeted students were from a fourth- and a sixth-grade classroom in a middle-class suburban community. The lack of social skills development interfered with positive interaction among peers in the classroom, as documented by means of teacher observation, teacher checklists and student surveys. Probable cause data was analyzed, revealing that students lacked a traditional family setting in which there was little parent-student bonding. The data also revealed a significant negative influence of television role models. Solution strategies were analyzed, and two intervention strategies were chosen and implemented: prosocial signs and sayings to promote values, and strategies for teaching social skills to increase the positive behavior and prosocial classroom environment. Post-intervention data indicated an increase in cooperative behavior. Positive interaction among peers was increased by improved social skill development. (Contains 25 references, a teacher checklist, and a copy of the student survey.) (JPB)

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IMPROVING COOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR THROUGH THE USE OF SOCIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

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ABSTRACT

This report describes an intervention program for improving social skills in order to increase cooperative behavior in students. The targeted population consisted of a fourth grade and sixth grade class in a middle class suburban community. The lack of social skills development interfered with positive interaction amongst peers in the classroom which was documented through teacher observation, teacher checklists and student surveys.

After analyzing probable cause data, it revealed that students lacked a traditional family setting in which there was very little parent-student bonding. The data also revealed that a significant amount of TV models negatively fostered an anti-social, anti- caring behavior. Due to circumstances portrayed on TV, students are growing up in a society that has been poisoned by events such as teenage suicide, unemployment, drug abuse, drop out rates, poverty, self interest and material goods.

Upon reviewing various solution strategies by knowledgeable others, and analyzing the problem setting, two intervention strategies resulted. Long's (1995) Prosocial signs and sayings to promote values, and Bellanca and Fogarty 's (1991) Strategies for teaching social skills will increase the positive behavior and prosocial classroom environment.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in cooperative behavior. Positive interaction amongst peers was increased by improved social skill development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1- PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT 1

General Statement of the Problem 1

Immediate Problem Context 1

The Surrounding Community 3

Regional and National Context of the Problem 6

CHAPTER 2 - PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION 8

Problem Evidence 8

Probable Causes 12

CHAPTER 3 - THE SOLUTION STRATEGY 16

Literature Review 16

Project Objectives and Processes 20

Action Plan 21

Methods of Assessment 24

CHAPTER 4 - PROJECT RESULTS 26

Historical Description of the Intervention 26

Presentation and Analysis of Results 28

Conclusions and Recommendations 35

REFERENCES 37

APPENDIX

A TEACHER CHECKLISTS 39

B STUDENT SURVEYS 41

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted fourth and sixth grade regular education classes exhibit a lack of social skills development that interfere with positive interaction amongst peers in the classroom. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher checklists and student surveys.

Immediate Problem Context

This action research project takes place in two schools in the same elementary school district. Site A is an elementary school (grades K-5) and site B is a middle school (grades 6-8). This school district is located near a major metropolitan area. The information for the following tables was derived from the 1995-1996 Community Update for the targeted district.

Table 1 represents the racial/ethnic characteristics and total enrollment of both sites. The majority of students in the two sites are white. Site A and site B have a high percentage of Hispanic students. The total enrollment is comparable throughout the two sites.

Low income students represent families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Site A and site B have comparable low-income levels, 37.6% at site A and 24.0% at site B.

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Characteristics and Total Enrollment

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/P. Islander	Native American	Total Enrollment
Site A	49.1%	6.0%	40.9%	3.8%	0.2%	601
Site B	58.6%	6.0%	27.4%	7.9%	0.1%	811

Table 2 represents attendance patterns which include mobility and chronic truancy. A perfect attendance rate (100%) means that all students attended school every day. The student mobility rate is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave a school during the school year. Students may be counted more than once. Chronic truants are students who were absent from school without valid cause for 10% or more of the last 180 school days. At both sites A and B the attendance and student mobility rates are high. However, the truancy rates at both sites is non-existent.

Table 2

Attendance Patterns

	Attendance	Student Mobility	Chronic Truancy
Site A	95.3%	19.6%	0.0%
Site B	94.3%	13.0%	0.0%

The targeted population at site A is a fourth grade, self-contained class consisting of 23 students. In this classroom, the following types of students are serviced: bilingual, learning disabled, behavior disordered, gifted, and speech and language impaired. Students receive Music and Physical Education instruction three

times a week for 30 minutes and Art instruction for 60 minutes once a week. The students receive computer technology training 60 minutes a week. The fourth graders receive a lunch period of 60 minutes which is broken down into 30 minutes of eating and 30 minutes of recess, followed by another 15 minutes of recess in the afternoon.

The students at site B are in a sixth grade Language Arts/Reading classroom for 80 minutes a day. Within the classroom there are learning disabled, behavior disordered, gifted, bilingual, hearing impaired and speech and language impaired students. All these students receive 40 minutes of advisory time, which teaches team building and basic academic skills. Students attend Physical Education class for 40 minutes everyday. The students rotate through six types of exploratory classes throughout the year: Home Economics, Technology, Art , Drama, Foreign Language, and Music. Each student's lunch period is 30 minutes with no recess.

Because the two sites are in the same district, they share many of the same educational programs. The students all have access to computer labs as well as a library media center. Sites A and B have bilingual classes in their schools. All the students complete a drug and gang awareness education program such as Teaching Alternatives to Gangs (TAG), Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE), or Violence Education and Gang Awareness (VEGA).

The Surrounding Community

Both sites A and B are located in the same school district that serves four neighboring communities. The middle schools in the district feed into two high schools. The total enrollment of the district as stated in the 1996-1997 Community Update is 6,847. This district was part of a grant program in connection with the state Board of Education and is now in a partnership with a state university to train student teachers.

The information in Table 3 categorizes teaching staff by their professional characteristics. In the school district there is a large percentage that have obtained a Masters Degree and beyond. Because both sites are in the same district, the information given in the two schools' report cards was compiled by district instead of by individual schools.

Table 3

Teacher/Administrator Characteristics

	Average Teaching Experience	Teachers with Bachelor's Degree	Teachers with Master's & Above
District	12.6 years	43.1%	56.9%

Sites A and B are located in the same community. According to the Community Profile, the population is about 30,000. In 1990, 90.4% of the population was White, 1.7% were Black, 0.2% were Native American, 4.3% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3.5% were listed as other. Of the White population, 9% were of Hispanic origin. Among family households, 83.9% were comprised of married couples, while 16.1% consisted of single parent households. Family households that include children are 46.2% and the average family size is 2.91 people. The socioeconomic status of the community indicates the median family income is $45,502. The per capita income is $18,648. In this community the median home price is $123,750, and the median rent is $599 per month. This village houses many industrial parks and is the national headquarters of many large companies, each employing over 450 workers. There is support from large companies to expand school resources and facilities. The community also houses many shopping centers, restaurants, park district facilities including golf courses, and places of worship.

A large grant was given to the district, and a portion of it was used to put on an addition to site B's Library Media Center. Site B now has the largest Technology facility in the state of Illinois due to this grant money. Along with additions to site B's building, new computers and software were purchased and distributed among the classrooms in the building. Lap top computers were purchased as well, so that students have an opportunity to work in the classroom on papers and various homework assignments. Site A also has seen some reconstruction to its building, which includes new carpeting, painting, additions to the upstairs wing, and an update in the Library Media Center. New books and computers were purchased and added to the collection already in place in the LMC.

The entire district also has a very important partnership with Illinois State University. The University sends a number of Education majors in their last year into the district to be trained in the classroom. The program consists of a year long Student Teaching experience. The student teachers are in the classroom for the first 18 weeks only 2-3 days and in class themselves 3-4 days. During their first 18 weeks they are observing, developing and implementing mini lessons. During this time they have an opportunity to observe many different grade levels and different buildings in the district. After winter break, in January, their full time teaching experience begins. Full control of the classroom is taken, and they are responsible for any duties that their mentoring teacher had. In May, the student teachers wrap up units and prepare the mentoring teachers for the return into the classroom. Illinois State has provided the district with quality students, and in turn the district offers the best learning experience. On an average, each year, the district hires about half of the student teachers The partnership with the University has grown into a long term project. Between the two organizations, Illinois State University developed a masters program in Administration directed toward the district's employees only. The district houses the program in one

of the administration buildings

Regional and National Context of the Problem

In the article, "The Teacher's Role in Developing Social Skills" from the Teacher's Guide to Last one Picked On..., Lavoie (1996) discusses his rationale on social development in the classroom setting. Lavoie (1996) believes:

> The effective educator must be ever mindful of the simple fact that children go to school for a living. School is their job, their livelihood, their identity. Therefore, the critical role that school plays in the child's social development and self-concept must be recognized. Even if a child is enjoying academic success in the classroom, his attitude about school will be determined by the degree of social success that he experiences. (p. 1)

Children who are not experiencing social success fall into four social categories in the school setting (Lavoie, 1996). The first category is called "rejected". These are students who are consistently ridiculed, bullied, and harassed by fellow classmates. The second category is "isolated". Unlike the first category, these are not students who are openly rejected, yet they are ignored and uninvolved in social activities. The third category is called "controversial". Within this group are students who have built some friendships based on common interests, but rarely move past these immediate friendships. The last is "popular". These are students who have established successful peer relations within a variety of groups. The same research has shown that many students who are diagnosed learning disabled often fall into the rejected or isolated categories. Over all, students who fall into the rejected, isolated, or controversial categories have a tendency to develop a low status reputation that unfortunately remains with them throughout their schools careers (Lavoie, 1996).

These children often become socially incompetent and have difficulty in today's classrooms. Lavoie (1996) believes that "The socially incompetent child often

experiences isolation and rejection in his neighborhood, on the school bus, and in group social activities. The teacher can provide this student with a classroom setting wherein he can feel comfortable, accepted, and welcome" (p. 2). Teachers need to stress cooperative skills in their classrooms to provide this kind of caring environment. Bellanca (1992) states, "The methods for teaching cooperative social skills have not only proven their worth, but also provided a framework for intensifying academic achievement, fostering higher-order thinking, and extending learning into new dimensions for all learners" (p. 202-203). Incorporating a social skills curriculum into academics prepares students for the challenges they will face throughout their lives.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

There are many types of evidence that can be collected to document the existing problem. Student surveys and teacher checklists will be used to identify the social skills or lack there of between the students in the classroom.

Student Surveys

Surveys were given to students during the first week of September. Twenty-three surveys were distributed and collected at site A and 29 at site B (n=52). Students were asked to think about how they get along with their classmates in a cooperative group. For each question, they could respond always, sometimes, or never. Survey questions were categorized as either group work, individual or social skills.

Table 4 represents the results from the student survey. The majority of the students in both sites answered sometimes regarding their preference for working in cooperative groups. A low percentage at both sites felt satisfied with goal achievement while working in groups. A high majority at both sites answered sometimes or never when asked if they felt others listened and respected their opinions. Although students liked to work in groups, the low percentage of goal achievement shows evidence that there is a lack of social skills within a cooperative group structure. The teacher checklists provides further evidence that students lack social skills.

Table 4

Results of Student Survey

	Site A			Site B		
Item	A	S	N	A	S	N
Group work						
Likes working in cooperative groups	52.2%	47.8%	0.0%	41.4%	58.6%	0.0%
Would rather work in groups	34.8%	65.2%	0.0%	27.6%	72.4%	0.0%
Spends most time disagreeing	0.0%	39.1%	60.9%	6.9%	72.4%	20.7%
Spends most time completing work	65.2%	34.8%	0.0%	27.6%	72.4%	0.0%
All goals are accomplished	21.7%	78.3%	0.0%	24.1%	75.9%	0.0%
Individual						
Prefers working alone	4.3%	60.9%	34.8%	13.8%	65.5%	20.7%
Social Skills						
When talking, others listen	17.4%	82.6%	0.0%	37.9%	62.1%	0.0%
Listen when others talk	60.6%	30.4%	0.0%	65.5%	34.5%	0.0%
You respect opinions	73.9%	21.7%	0.0%	65.5%	34.5%	0.0%
Others respect you	30.4%	69.6%	0.0%	34.5%	65.5%	0.0%

Teacher Checklists

Teachers at both sites used a checklist to record when students exhibited a lack of certain social skills when working in a cooperative group setting. Also noted were certain behaviors exhibited in the same group setting. The social skills and behaviors were observed twice a week for a period of three weeks in September. The specific day and time of day varied. Because students at both sites had a variety of special activities occurring, observations were noted Mondays in the morning and Wednesdays in the afternoon the first and third weeks. On the second and fourth weeks, observations were noted Tuesdays in the morning and Thursdays in the afternoon. The rationale behind this schedule was to not allow a special activity or time of the day to negatively or positively influence the results of the teacher checklist.

Table 5 represents the results of the teacher checklists. Results from both sites were collapsed due to their high similarity in numbers. Percentages were tabulated from the total number of students at both sites (n=52). Results will be discussed in the two sub-sections of social skills and behaviors.

Social skills. A high percentage of students (almost 50%) exhibited a lack of independence. These students were not able to perform required and explained tasks without repeated guidance from either the teacher or other students. Also substantially high was the percentage of students that exhibited a lack of listening. This included students who were not following directions, were off task and/or not listening to fellow group members. About one-fourth of the students exhibited a lack of responsibility and personal commitment to rules. The results clearly show that students were deficient in the skills of independence, responsibility and listening.

Table 5

Results of Teacher Checklist

Item	% that exhibit	% that don't exhibit
Social Skills (lacking)		
Fairness	8.1%	93.9%
Helpfulness	6.1%	83.7%
Self control	16.3%	83.7%
Independence	42.8%	57.2%
Rescuing	10.2%	89.8%
Comforting	18.3%	81.7%
Taking turns	18.3%	81.7%
Responsibility	28.5%	71.5%
Respect	8.1%	91.9%
Personal commitment to rules	24.4%	75.6%
Sharing	10.2%	89.8%
Defending	6.1%	93.9%
Listening	30.6%	69.3%
Behaviors		
Seeks power		
Over teacher	4.0%	86.0%
Over student	14.2%	85.8%
Seeks attention		
Over teacher	20.4%	79.6%
Over student	26.5%	73.5%
Lacks confidence		
Over teacher	8.1%	91.9%
Over student	32.6%	67.4%
Seeks revenge		
Over teacher	10.2%	89.8%
Over student	10.2%	89.8%

Behaviors. A substantially high percentage of students (about one-third) exhibited a lack of confidence over other students. These students were unwilling to share their opinions and ideas relevant to the activity. Because of this, they made little or no contribution to the group. Over 40% of students seeked attention over the teacher and students. This was displayed with off task and inappropriate comments and behaviors. These results indicate that students not only lack confidence in themselves, but are also needy of attention and are seeking it in negative and inappropriate ways. The behaviors, as well as the lack of social skills exhibited, can be attributed to the various number of causes, both on a global and local level.

Probable Causes

There are a number of causes for the lack of social skills in children today. Fortunately, if targeted at a young age the mind can be shaped into what children used to be many years ago, which used to be acceptable. Some major causes for the problem include: the dissolution of the traditional family, decrease of society's well being, a growing economic disparity, TV models, increased emphasis on self interest and material goods, and a limited English Proficiency.

The Dissolution of the Traditional Family

"The Dissolution of the Traditional Family" (Bellanca, 1992, p. 201) is becoming a serious concern, because it is on the rise in today's society. The family structure is changing from a two parent family, where the father brings home the paycheck and the mother stays home and cares for the children, to either a single parent family, a dual working family, or no parent at all. Children in today's society are not spending as much quality time with their parents and therefore are lacking in social interaction. "Some studies report a 50% decrease over the past 30 years in the amount of time parents are spending with kids in constructive activities. The lack of adult supervision and time spent doing constructive, cooperative activities compounds the effects of

other negative influences in the social environment for kids" (Garbarino, 1997, p. 14). With very little time devoted to children because of time and work schedules, children are missing role models in which they could interact. When role models are not present, the children are on their own and unfortunately, must miss out on the chance of being a child and take on the role of an adult.

Decrease of Society's Well Being

"The social world of children, the social context in which they grow up, has become poisonous to their development" (Garbarino, 1997, p. 13). Children in today's society are seen as adults and forced to grow up quickly in experience despite their age. There is a decrease of society's well being, which includes teenage suicide, unemployment, drug abuse, drop out rates, and poverty (Garbarino, 1997). When young children deal with all this in their daily life, it is no wonder they have very short childhoods. According to Berreth and Berman (1997), childhood is no longer seen as a special and different time than adulthood. Society has molded a child into the exact image of the adult. By doing this, the child is rushed into growing up and misses the roles a child should take. As a result, the children have not had the opportunity to mature in social situations with other children their age. The children are taking on more adult like roles within their family structure to make up for the absenteeism of one parent. Therefore, the children must be responsible for not only themselves, but an adult as well. It is evident that what used to be the "traditional family structure," is now diminishing.

Growing Economic Disparity

There is a growing economic disparity which contributes to the dissolution of the traditional family structure (Berreth & Berman, 1997). "At present, about one in five of all U.S. children, and two in five among age 6 and under, live below the officially defined poverty line." (Garbarino, 1997, p. 15) The United States has the biggest gap

among modern societies between rich and poor. There seems to be no happy middle. Site A has a 32.6% rate of low income students and site B has a reported rate of 24.0% (Community Update, 1996-1997). The children, therefore, are not able to partake in many community activities due to financial restrictions, and as a result turn to the television for company and entertainment.

TV Models

With little parental involvement at home due to society's rough economy, children tend to seek out role models on television. "Television, with it's aptitude for modeling anti-social, anti-caring behaviors, has filled a void in the character formation of today's youth" (Bellanca, 1992, p. 202). Children see the actions and personalities on television and adapt them to their own environment. By doing this, the child desensitizes himself to his own pain and that of others. What the child views on television is what he believe to be "real life" and therefore, acts it out whether it is an act of kindness or violence. Unfortunately, children are not learning appropriate social skills on the television. What they are witnessing is being carried over into the academic and social (or anti-social) arenas of their lives. TV role models take the place of a parental role, and express the importance of glamour and material goods rather than successful social relationships.

Increased Emphasis on Self Interest and Material Goods

What is seen on TV and looked upon as a role model can be at times glamorous in a young, impressionable child. There has been an increase over the years on self interest and material goods (Berreth & Berman, 1997). According to Berreth and Berman (1997), young people are easily seduced by material culture that promotes instant gratification. The lack of social skills taught at home is making school life in the classroom difficult. What or how much a child has is becoming an important part in developing friendships. According to Bellanca (1992, p. 202), "public schools,

because they are free of religious influence, have a value empty or "every man for himself" philosophy which undermines cooperation, responsibility, and respect." In today's schools, it is hard to touch upon everyone's value system because their is a higher rate of multiculturalism.

Limited English Proficiency

Lastly, due to a high rate of cultural differences there is a limited English proficiency rate in both site A and B. "Use of spoken language effectively in formal and informal situations to communicate ideas and information and to ask and answer questions," is a goal in both sites (Community Update, 1996-1997, p. 2). If children are struggling to communicate with teachers, it is certain that peer interaction will be most difficult within content instruction.

The lack of social skills in children will not go away unless some badly needed steps are taken to improve the instruction in the school system. At this point it is in school that the children will more than likely receive the instruction, because the home is lacking in either parent interest or involvement. All the causes mentioned, the dissolution of the traditional family, decrease of society's well being, a growing economic disparity, TV models, an increased emphasis on self interest and material goods, and Limited English Proficiency are among the many problems young children must face in their everyday lives. There are some solutions that are in the making to, if not completely solve this problem, at least modify it to some degree.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The lack of social skills in the classroom are on a rise. The children in today's society are not receiving enough parental involvement and interaction in their own homes, and therefore bringing into the classroom a lack of positive relationships. In order to improve the classroom environment, there must be a merge of social and emotional learning (Bellanca, 1992; Berliner & Casanova, 1989; Cummings & Haggerty, 1997; Elias & Branden-Muller, 1994; Grimley, Zucker, Fakouri & Thompson, 1991; Long, 1995; McCafferty, 1990; Miller, 199; Rimm, 1997; Salkowski, 1994). To enforce this, the material must be presented in manageable components, modeled by successful performances of skills, giving students opportunities to practice, and lastly to provide feedback and reinforcement.

For a classroom to be successful in the development of social skills, the seats must be arranged so that the students are able to interact with each other in a face to face fashion (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). By having the seats arranged in groups of three's or four's, the students can move around each group freely and when necessary. Cooperative learning activities are more feasible when the students are already in groups. There are many advantages to having the seats in this design. The students will get used to facing one another, and they will learn when it is appropriate to discuss with the other students, and when it is appropriate to focus on the teacher. A mutual respect from teacher to student, or student to student is gained when students realize the importance of face to face interaction. Being able to see and hear

your team members is critical to successful cooperative learning activities.

Cooperative learning activities teach the students that group work is not dominated by just the smartest or the loudest in the group (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). Students learn that everyone must contribute their ideas. In the "outside world," many professions place an emphasis on team work. Students need to be responsible not as an entire group, but individually as well. To encourage individual accountability, cooperation journals are to be used as a reflection. For every social skill taught, the students will reflect on how they felt the group worked, what they could have done better next time, and what role they played in the group. The reflection follows the specific social skills lesson.

Teaching Social Skills

To go about teaching social skills (Bellanca, 1992), there must be a clear focus and plan. A social skills lesson must include the following: hook, teach, practice, observe, and reward. A hook lesson is necessary to lay down the groundwork. For students who lack cooperative skills, social skills, or live in a setting where negative social skills are emphasized, a hook lesson allows time to be dedicated to stress a certain skill. More time and energy could be spent on practice, reinforcement, and recognition of the proper social skills. All students need some sort of positive reinforcement and encouragement to practice these lessons.

The second portion of the plan is the teach aspect. Using a T-chart or web with students will enable them, after the hook, to generate the specific behaviors of the social skill. The students should fill out charts for both the appropriate skills and non appropriate skills. Both charts should be displayed in the classroom as well as each student getting their own copy to put inside an assignment notebook. Practice is the third step in the lesson plan.

After the hook and the teach, a guided skill practice is needed. The guided skill

practice should be in short intervals lasting any where from 2-4 minutes. An example of a guided practice on listening skills would be.think/ pair/ share partners. In this exercise the partnership takes turns sharing an opinion or thought with one another for about two minutes. Each partner takes a turn sharing. Extended practice gives students a chance to reinforce the skill in other subject areas other than just in the "social skills" lesson.

The fourth step in the lesson is observe. As the students are practicing the desired skill, the teacher has an opportunity to observe the students in action. To help the teacher with this task, a teacher checklist is used. Encouraging positive behavior as it is seen helps the groups stay focused and on task. Practice and observation should continue until the social skill becomes automatic.

The last step in the lesson is reward. In cooperative learning practice, it is best to use a cooperative reward system, for example, coupons, tokens, or marbles in a jar. The groups should be told before hand that they will receive a reward for positive and on task behavior. This whole process takes time and patience. When the skill is first introduced with the hook, the students enter the first stage of change: awareness. If the hook is good and it catches their attention, they will perceive the need for the skill and increase their commitment to improve.

An example lesson of a quality social skill would be prosocial signs and sayings to promote values (Fad & Ross, 1995). Long states, "The socialization of children is a complex interpersonal process in which the parents and other significant adults try to pass on their values and beliefs to the next generation... One method for teaching values was the frequent use of sayings or adages" (Long, 1995, pp. 20-25). For example, the class will discuss common signs seen in life. The importance and relevance to daily life will also be expressed. Students are then put into cooperative groups. Each group is given a saying (for example "Put on your brakes and avoid

mistakes"). They will then create a sign representing the saying and share it with the class. The signs will be posted around the room and referred to when needed. The advantages to the prosocial signs and sayings are that they promote attitudes toward self, learning, others, and behavior. Lastly, they sanction feelings and motivate students. Some programs have been created to help children improve their social skills, and become aware that there are people willing to help.

Social Skills Projects

Projects that could be implemented are Raising Healthy Children (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997) or Project Extend (Bellanca, 1992). Raising Healthy Children provides an intervention that bonds students to family and school. Strategies include: staff development, parenting workshops, home based services and student activities. "Staff development for the Raising Healthy Children project assists teachers in integrating social/emotional learning into their classrooms " (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997, p. 29). There are five staff development sessions offered to teachers. The first is a proactive classroom management session where teachers learn to help students become self-managers. The second is motivating at-risk learners where teachers are are taught how to encourage students to set goals in order to become successful. Teaching social skills is the third session. The focus is direct instruction of both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The next session is teaching strategies to maximize student involvement through the use of cooperating grouping. The final session is reading instruction. Literature is integrated with social and emotional learning through the use of journal writing.

These interventions were suggested so that people could be trained in promoting healthy and successful social skills. Some parents are at a lost when it comes to their child's behavior, but with these training classes, the parents will receive help not only from the facilitators, but from the schools as well. The positive effects

Raising Healthy Children created were increased positive attachment to family and schools, decreased suspensions and expulsions, decreased drug use and delinquency, and increased scores on standardized tests (Cumming & Haggerty, 1997).

The Project Extend (Bellanca, 1992), involves the teachers and principals learning as a critical instruction tool to teach social skills. Steps include: hook, lesson, practice, reflection, feedback, and transfer. The hook involves role playing that portrays a situation in which the targeted social skill is demonstrated. A T-chart for the targeted and non-targeted skill is then taught. The next step is to place the students into cooperative learning groups with assigned roles, where students are encouraged to practice the social skill. Throughout this social skill instruction, teachers observe and point out positive examples of the targeted skill, while students reflect on the group activity by answering Mrs. Potter's Questions. Assessments may include weekly entries in a cooperation journal.

In summary, in order for a classroom to be successful in the development of social skills, the teacher must consider many components. Interaction among students must take place in a face to face fashion to promote a mutual respect. The social skills lesson must have a clear plan and focus. The teacher then takes the opportunity to observe these students. Until the social skill becomes automatic, this process continues.

Project Objective and Processes

As a result of social skills instruction, during the period of September, 1997 to January, 1998, the (target group) will increase cooperative behavior as measured by teacher checklists, teacher observation, student surveys, and student journals.

In order to accomplish the objective described above, the following three process objectives are necessary and were written to guide the sequence and

selection of activities to be included in the action plan.

1. Classroom environment will be designed to foster prosocial behavior.
2. Direct instruction of social skills will be implemented.
3. Teacher will devise a series of cooperative learning activities that foster prosocial behavior.

Action Plan

I. Data collection to show evidence of the problem (Beginning September)
   A. Opening Cooperative Activity
      1. Teacher instructs on the roles of cooperative groups
         a. worrier
         b. recorder
         c. materials manager
         d. encourager
      2. Students will complete one of the following lessons: "What's your role?" "Cooperative? Competitive? or Individualistic?" or "Torn Circles" (as described Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, pp. 20-25)
   B. Teacher Checklist [on-going] (Appendix A)
   C. Student Survey (Appendix B)
   D. Teacher Observation/Anecdotal Records [on-going]
II. Design classroom to foster prosocial behavior (September)
   A. Cooperative activity with prosocial signs and sayings (as described Long)
      1. Students are grouped and assigned roles.
      2. Groups are given a prosocial sayings or adages on poster board from the teacher.
      3. Students are to draw a picture that illustrates the corresponding saying on poster board.

4. Groups will present their posters and will discuss their interpretation.
5. Posters will be hung throughout the room for the entire school year.
    a. As social situations arise amongst peers in the classroom, the posters are referred to by the teacher as reminders to help students reflect and/or solve the situation at hand.
    b. Posters will also be used as a reference when students are journaling.

B. Seating arrangement of classroom (as described Bellanca & Fogarty)
    1. Teacher instructs how groups should sit in triangles or circles, and shows how and/or where to move to when working in groups.
    2. Group seating arrangement allows for groups to interact in a face-to-face manner.

III. Teacher will instruct specific social skills on a weekly basis (September - January).

A. Social skill instruction will be taught on the first day of the week using the following techniques (as described Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, p.49)
    1. Hook Lesson
        a. Role playing
        b. Story
        c. Non-academic activity
    2. Teach or Instruct
        a. T-chart for the targeted skill (example: listening).
        b. T-chart for the non-targeted skill (example: non-listening).
    3. Practice
        a. Guided skill practice in 3-5 minute segments.
        b. Emphasis is placed on targeted skill while students work in cooperative learning groups and are encouraged to be aware

of it throughout the work session.

4. Observe/Reflect
    a. Teacher will watch for and point out positive examples of the targeted skill as they appear within the group work session.
    b. Students will reflect on the group dynamics and/or the frequency of positive examples of the targeted skill through reflective/metacognitive activities.
        i. Mrs. Potter's Questions
        ii. PMI
5. Reward for displaying positive targeted behavior
    a. Individual
        i. Praise and/or
        ii. Stickers/tokens/coupons
    b. Group
        i. Praise and/or
        ii. Stickers/tokens/coupons

B. The following social skills will be emphasized on a week-by-week basis:
    1. Respect
    2. Self control
    3. Listen
    4. Taking turns
    5. Responsibility
    6. Fairness
    7. Sharing
    8. Helpfulness
    9. Independence

10. Comforting (empathy/sympathy)

C. The teacher will also continue to emphasize and assess the weekly social skill, while building on all previous social skills, through cooperative learning groups used for academic purposes. (September - January)

1. Teacher checklist [on-going]
2. Teacher observation/anecdotal records
3. Weekly student "Cooperation Journals" (as described Bellanca)
    a. Students will reflect on what they have done well in using the targeted social skill of the week (and any of those thereafter).
    b. Students will design a cooperative goal for themselves for the upcoming week.
    c. Mrs. Potter's questions, PMIs, and other metacognitive reflection sheets may be included in the journal as per teacher/student discretion

IV. Data collection to assess effectiveness of interventions (End of January)

A. Teacher checklist [on-going]

B. Student surveys

C. Teacher observation/anecdotal records

D. Student Cooperation Journals

E. Compare and summarize the information from pre-assessments (I) and post-assessments (IV).

Methods of Assessment

To determine the extent to which the problem presently exists within the targeted classrooms and to determine the effects of the intervention, the teacher-researchers designed an assessment plan consisting of four key components. These components include teacher checklists, teacher anecdotal records, student surveys,

and student Cooperation Journals. The teacher checklists, anecdotal records, and student Cooperation Journals will be on-going in nature, and will be compared and analyzed from the beginning of the intervention to the conclusion of it. The student survey will be given twice: once after the first introductory cooperative activity, and again after the final cooperative activity.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase cooperative behavior. The classroom environment was designed to foster prosocial behavior. Direct instruction of social skills was implemented. The teacher devised a series of cooperative learning activities that fostered prosocial behavior.

The evidence was collected through surveys and checklists. The intervention began the first week of September and lasted until the first week of January. The opening cooperative activity ("What's Your Role") consisted of assigning students to a group. Each base group was instructed on the four different roles: worrier, recorder, materials manager and encourager. The students remained in these groups throughout the entire intervention.

During the opening activity, the teacher conducted the Teacher Checklist (Appendix A), which then became on-going throughout each new activity. This provided evidence of specific social skills that were lacking. According to this evidence the following social skills were emphasized on a week-by-week basis: respect, self control, listening, taking turns, responsibility, fairness, sharing, helpfulness and independence. The teacher continued to emphasize and assess the weekly social skill, while building on all previous social skills, through cooperative learning groups.

The classroom was designed to foster prosocial behavior. Each base group was given a prosocial saying on a poster board. Students drew a corresponding

picture and presented and discussed their interpretations. Signs were posted and referred to throughout the intervention. Also designed to promote prosocial behavior, seating was arranged in triangles and circles in order to allow face-to-face interaction.

After the teacher altered the design of the classroom, the specific social skill was taught on the first day of the week for the following nine weeks and reinforced throughout the entire intervention. Each lesson had specific components. The hook was used to introduce the social skill by doing a non-academic activity, such as role-playing or story-telling. During the instruction, a T-chart was created for the targeted and non-targeted skill. Emphasis was then placed on the targeted skill while students practiced the skill in their cooperative groups. Students were expected to be aware of skill throughout the work session.

The teacher observed and pointed out positive examples of the targeted skill as they appeared within the group work session. Students reflected in their weekly Cooperation Journals on the group dynamics through reflective metacognitive activities, such as Mrs. Potter's Questions and PMI. While reflecting, they designed a cooperative goal for the upcoming week. Individual and group rewards were given when the targeted behavior was displayed. Individual and group rewards included: praise, stickers, tokens and coupons.

There were a few deviations that occurred during the implementation. One deviation was the placement of an Illinois State University Intern at both sites. The student interns were in the classroom for six weeks. Their responsibilities included assisting the teacher and students, observing the school environment and carrying out lesson plans. The student interns taught one social skill at both sites. Because of this, there were two facilitators at each site able to monitor the lesson. Due to the responsibilities of the student intern program and classroom curriculum objectives, the weekly social skill instruction did not occur consistently. There was a lapse of two

weeks between the fourth and fifth social skill. Two skills (respect and responsibility) at site A required an extra week of practice due to a high majority of students still lacking the skill. The last social skill instruction was removed from the action plan because the initial observations did not indicate a need. The assessment measures included the teacher checklist, which assessed the social skills and behaviors, and the student survey which assessed students' perception of cooperative group work.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Teacher checklist, student surveys and teacher observation were used to document the lack of social skills exhibited by the students.

Teacher Checklists

In order to assess the effects of social skill instruction through cooperative group work, the teacher checklist was used twice a week to record the social skills and behaviors exhibited throughout the intervention. Observations were made not only during the social skills instruction, but also during any cooperative group activity. Times of the day varied depending on special activities. Table 6 represents the collapsed results of the teacher checklists across both sites. (Percentages were collapsed due to similarity). The percentages represent the results at the end of the intervention, more specifically, the last 2 weeks. Because each social skill was targeted and then reinforced, students were still expected to exhibit all social skills at the end of the intervention. Results will be discussed in the two sub-sections of social skills and behaviors.

Social skills. The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on the majority of social skills. There was a dramatic decrease in the percentage of students that exhibited a lack of listening and sharing. All students (100%) did not exhibit a lack of sharing. The observations were based on sharing of ideas, opinions and materials. When some students were missing notebook paper or pencils, other students shared

their own materials. In the beginning of the intervention, students were not likely to help out their fellow students. The percentage of the students that exhibited a lack of listening decreased by 12.2%. Students were active listeners during directions and interaction with students. Also significant was the decrease in percentage (about 8%) of students exhibiting a lack of self control and responsibility. Students showed self control by not shouting out answers, staying on task and waiting patiently for their turn. Goal setting, homework completion and organization of materials increased student responsibility. The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on not only social skills, but behaviors as well.

Behaviors. Teachers observed greater confidence in students while working with other students. The percentage of students exhibiting a lack of confidence over other students decreased from about one-third to about one-sixth. Students were more willing and comfortable to express their opinions and ideas. They were also able to stay focused on the goal of the group work. For example, students at site A were working on a persuasive poster on the importance of farming. As the teacher walked around to each group, the dialogue observed among students was all relevant to the topic. Since students were more comfortable with each other, they made personal connections to the topic. One students said, " When I went to my uncle's farm, I milked cows. It wasn't easy, but it gave milk to people in the surrounding communities." Another added, "I wondered how we got milk in the city."

Because of this interactive dialogue, they were less needy of negative attention (40% to 34%) and sought it in more appropriate ways. It became obvious that students wanted to accomplish the goals by staying on the topic and not being disruptive or inappropriate to each other. When one student in the group started swaying from the goal, others were heard saying, "Please get on task. What is your opinion about this?" Along with the social skills and behaviors assessed by the

teacher using the teacher checklist, the student surveys allowed students to reflect upon their own feelings about cooperative group work.

Table 6

Results of Teacher Checklist

Item	% that exhibit	% that don't exhibit
Social Skills (lacking)		
Fairness	6.1%	93.9%
Helpfulness	6.1%	93.9%
Self control	8.2%	91.8%
Independence	42.9%	57.1%
Rescuing	10.2%	89.8%
Comforting	14.3%	85.7%
Taking turns	16.3%	83.7%
Responsibility	20.4%	79.6%
Respect	4.1%	95.9%
Personal commitment to rules	24.5%	75.5%
Sharing	0.0%	100.0%
Listening	18.4%	81.6%
Behaviors		
Seeks power		
Over teacher	0.0%	100.0%
Over student	8.2%	91.8%
Seeks attention		
Over teacher	14.3%	85.7%
Over student	20.4%	79.6%
Lacks confidence		
Over teacher	6.1%	93.9%
Over student	16.3%	83.7%
Seeks revenge		
Over teacher	6.1%	93.9%
Over student	8.2%	91.8%

Student Surveys

Students surveys were given in January when the intervention was completed. Students were once again asked to think about how they got along with their classmates in a cooperative group. They could respond always, sometimes or never for each response. The survey questions were categorized as either group work, individual or social skills.

Table 7 represents the results from the January student survey. The majority of students in both sites answered always regarding their preference for working in cooperative groups. The previous survey showed a majority answering sometimes. The percentage of students that felt satisfied with goal achievement while working in groups dramatically increased from 21.7% to 73.9% at site A and 24.1% to 48.0% at site B. In the beginning of the implementation, the teachers modeled how to identify and achieve the goal of the activity. By January, students were able to identify and achieve the goals on their own by setting the goal, brainstorming the steps to achieving the goal and setting a deadline.

A high percentage of students felt others always listened to them in their groups. At site A the percentage of students that felt respected by their group members dramatically increased from 30.4% to 60.9%. At site B the same occurred from 34.5% to 70.3%. The implementation, therefore, shows a positive effect on peer relationships. Although in September, students liked to work in groups, they expressed low goal achievement due to a lack of listening and respect for one another. In January, students still preferred working in groups, but the positive effect of mutual respect and listening allowed them to achieve their targeted goals. The student surveys given at the end of the intervention proved that students felt that their overall group work was more satisfying, meaningful and beneficial. The teachers

observed similar findings in the their own personal anecdotal records.

Table 7

Results of January Student Survey

	Site A			Site B		
Item	A	S	N	A	S	N
Group work						
Likes working in cooperative groups	65.2%	34.8%	0.0%	55.5%	44.5%	0.0%
Would rather work in groups	34.8%	65.2%	0.0%	29.6%	70.4%	0.0%
Spends most time disagreeing	0.0%	21.7%	78.3%	14.8%	33.3%	51.9%
Spends most time completing work	78.3%	21.7%	0.0%	40.7%	55.6%	3.7%
All goals are accomplished	73.9%	26.1%	0.0%	51.9%	48.1%	0.0%
Individual						
Prefers working alone	4.3%	34.8%	60.9%	0.0%	92.6%	7.4%
Social Skills						
When talking, others listen	82.6%	17.4%	0.0%	51.9%	37.0%	11.1%
Listen when others talk	78.3%	21.7%	0.0%	70.3%	29.7%	0.0%
You respect opinions	91.3%	8.7%	0.0%	81.5%	18.5%	0.0%
Others respect you	60.9%	39.1%	0.0%	70.3%	29.7%	0.0%

Teacher Observation/Anecdotal Records

The teacher observation and anecdotal records were made throughout the entire intervention and documented in a perpetual journal. This method of assessment was used to simply note observations and instances of students exhibiting social skills while working in cooperative groups. As teachers read the students' journals, they noted and reflected upon the students' own examples. The teacher observation and anecdotal records were divided up into the two categories of cooperation and self and group reflection.

Cooperation. Teachers observed an increased desire to cooperate. Students' social skills were improved and redefined with every lesson. Within the cooperative groups, teachers noticed increased responsibility in role assignment. Students were able to carry out their roles and stay focused. Because of this, there was more time on task. The goal setting was more specific to the group which created a structured environment. Students showed more organization with all necessary materials, ideas and conclusions. Teachers observed greater questioning and listening within the groups. At site B, the checker of the group realized one student was not contributing so she redirected his attention by asking, "Bobby, can you think of a time when you were not respected. How did that make you feel?" This lead Bobby to refocus on the topic and add his own examples. Knowing that everyone was counting on his response, it positively influenced him to contribute in a non-threatening environment. After these group activities, students were asked to reflect on the pluses and minuses of the group work.

Self and group reflection. Students were asked to reflect on what was done well in using the targeted social skill of the week in their Cooperation Journal. For instance, during the listening skill activity, one student at site A wrote, "I noticed I

listened to what my group was saying. Usually, I don't really pay much attention. Today, I tried to make eye contact with whoever was talking. I noticed that they were listening to me too. This make me feel good. The goal was accomplished." Included in their reflection were PMI charts. This chart was completed individually and/or in the group. Students reflected on pluses, minuses and interesting things that occurred. In the beginning of the intervention, the pluses were very brief and included examples such as "I like to work in groups because I don't feel so alone on projects." By the end of the intervention, students were more specific, "During today's group activity Chad, Melissa and I seemed to break down the assignment into simple parts without disagreeing on who is in charge of what. I felt like for once, I was able to choose something I really wanted without a fight."

On the same note, students were very general in describing the minuses in the beginning of the intervention. They also tended to blame others for the lack of goal accomplishment or cohesiveness in the group. As each skill was targeted and reinforced, students began to take more responsibility in the accomplishments or lack of accomplishments. For example one student wrote, " I don't know what it is but whenever I'm around Ben I act goofy. It's not his fault. He doesn't egg me on or anything. I really need to take my role more seriously. Today I was the "worrier" and I wasn't very worried. Christine was worried. I'll try to stay focused next time."

Overall, by combining the teachers' observations and reflections with the students' observations and reflections, the intervention became more guided in providing social skill instruction. If a teacher observed (in her own records or the students' journals) that the majority of students still felt disrespected in cooperative group work, then the skill would be retaught and/or practiced if necessary. This lead to not only an ability to specifically reflect on the pluses and minuses of the group work, but an overall improvement in the willingness to cooperatively work together to

accomplish the desired goals.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data of the student surveys, teacher checklists, teacher observation/anecdotal records and student reflections, the students showed an improvement in cooperative behavior through the use of social skill instruction. The social skills learned during cooperative group activities seem to have evolved and transferred to interpersonal relationships. Relationships formed on positive behaviors and interactions, instead of negative attention seeking behaviors. Because of this prosocial behavior, teachers intervened less and students were able to take responsibility for the actions of their group. The prosocial behavior transferred to academic areas as well. Students brought with them the social skills learned previously to other academic activities. Group problem solving flourished as a result. As a whole, there was a positive learning environment.

Although the intervention was successful, there are a few modifications to consider. The teacher checklist was too involved and confusing. The organization made it hard to quickly observe one student and move on to another. A recommendation would be to simplify the chart, perhaps splitting the social skills and behaviors in two separate checklists. Another recommendation would be to organize the students names in order according to base groups. This would allow the observer to focus on one group at a time. It would also not waste time trying to locate a name on the chart.

Enlisting help from others available in the building as well as outside the building would be another recommendation. These people could help with observations and facilitating the implementation. The roles of teaching the skill, facilitating group work and observing became a challenge. When the student interns were at the sites, it allowed more concentration in less roles. Special area teachers

could also get involved so the social skill could be transferred.

Although group work was successful, there were instances at both sites when students were unable to complete individual work without the assistance of a partner. A balance of group and individual activities is recommended. One suggestion is to allow more individual accountability, yet still work in cooperative groups.

In summary, the research and literature review indicated the necessity of social skill instruction. The socialization of children once began at home. The goals of society were clear, absolute and consistent at one time. Today, this is not the case. The school is now responsible for teaching and encouraging prosocial behavior. Through the use of a specific social skill intervention, teachers are able to identify lacking social skills and foster an environment where students see the importance of developing appropriate social skills. Cooperative group activities create a setting where students can practice and model social skills. These social skills are necessary in order to be successful in life.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER CHECKLIST

TEACHER CHECKLIST OF STUDENT INTERACTION

DATE _____ TEACHER _____

KEY FOR CHART

SOCIAL SKILLS:

Fairness
Helpfulness
Self Control
Independence
Rescuing
Comforting
Taking Turns
Responsibility
Respect
Personal Commitment to rules
Sharing
Defending
-Listening

SEEKS POWER
Over the teacher
Over the students

SEEKS ATTENTION
Over the teacher
Over the students

LACKS CONFIDENCE
Over the teacher
Over the students

SEEKS REVENGE
Over the Teacher
Over the students

	A	B	C	D	E
1	NAME	Social Skill	Attention t/s	Confid. t/s	Power t/s
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
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APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEY

Name: Date:

DIRECTIONS: Read each question below carefully and place a check under the column that applys. **A** for Always, **S** for Sometimes, and **N** for Never. This is to be done individually and will be collected when everyone is finished. Be honest when marking your answers.

GENERAL QUESTION
How well do you think you get along with your classmates in a cooperative group?

QUESTIONS	A	S	N
1. Do you like working in cooperative groups?			
2. Would you rather work alone?			
3. Would you rather work in groups?			
4. When in a cooperative group do you spend most of the time disagreeing?			
5. When in a cooperative group do you spend most of the time getting work done?			
6. When finished working in a group, all the goals of the task are accomplished?			
7. When you talk, do others listen?			
8. When others talk, do you listen?			
9. Do you respect other peoples' opinions in the group?			
10. Do other people respect you when you give your opinion?			